



## FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

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*For Immediate Release*

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June 22, 2007  
PR-062

### Clothing For The Colonies Explores 17<sup>th</sup> And 18<sup>th</sup> Century Fashions

Commemorating the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, Sully Historic Site in Chantilly, VA presents original textiles, needlework and clothing dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. Now through September, visitors can see the exquisite needlework, sumptuous silks and elegant accessories that provide glimpses of wealthy European lifestyles in the 17th century. A circa 1625 English "Sweet Bag" embroidered with precious metallic threads was produced not to hold candies, but to contain sweet smelling herbs and flowers that masked unpleasant odors.

Eighteenth century textiles, clothing and accessories have survived in greater abundance, and the exhibition features items used in America as well as Europe. Like today, the 18th century economy was global. One gown on view was made from cotton produced in India, printed in Europe and exported to North America during the American Revolutionary War. Textiles comprised a significant segment of the colonial economy and America was the most important market for British goods in the 18th century. An interesting item on display is a rare pair of circa 1790 shoes with a Philadelphia maker's label. Shoes were among the first articles of clothing to have product labels. In contrast, dressmaker's labels were not adopted until after the Civil War.

In addition to American and British items, the exhibition also features other European silks and embroideries. In the 18th century, clothing was made for the individual, and its cost was based upon the materials used not the labor of making it up. The clothing worn for the most elegant events was often made from lavishly patterned silks and embroidered goods. Men's formal wear was particularly opulent and featured embroidered coats and waistcoats. Such clothing was considered valuable and frequently recycled. One woman's gown was made from a silk brocade woven about 1725 and remade around 1775, some fifty years later!

Less formal clothing seldom survives, but this exhibition includes an embroidered cotton dress, circa 1775, whose skirts are looped up in the polonaise style, and a lovingly embroidered linen waistcoat, circa 1750, most likely worn during the warmer summer months. For most of the 18th century children were dressed in smaller versions of adult attire and several examples of their clothing are on view.

Sully was the 1794 home of Richard Bland Lee, now owned and operated by Fairfax County Park Authority. See the current exhibit daily except Tuesday from 11 am to 4 pm. This exhibit is sponsored by the Sully Foundation, Ltd. For more information call the site at 703-437-1794.

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